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## ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that the community college baccalaureate potentially represents the next major shift in purpose of the comprehensive community college in America. During the 20th century, community colleges concentrated on vocational and transfer two-year associate degrees, as well as the community service function, while universities handled the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral degree programs. The purpose of this study was to describe the factors and issues surrounding the development the 3-year Bachelor of Manufacturing Technology degree program at Westark College in Arkansas. The study examines three primary movements at play in the program, which was developed to respond to manufacturing industry demands in Fort Smith, Arkansas. First, the program proposed that the community college expand its mission to include the baccalaureate degree. Second, the program was based on the demonstration of student mastered competencies. Third, the program attempted to integrate the general education requirement into the competency-based program. The author collected and analyzed data gathered through interviews, literature reviews, document collections, and reflections. Interviews were conducted in person, with telephone and e-mail used for follow-up questions. Questions were open-ended. The author interviewed students, employers, administrators, and instructors. (Author/NB)

Factors and Issues Surrounding Development of One Community College  
Baccalaureate Degree Program

by

Jonathon V. McKee

A THESIS

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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Jonathon V. McKee for the degree of Doctor of Education presented on April 27,  
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The purpose of this study is to describe the factors and issues surrounding development of one community college baccalaureate degree program, the three-year Bachelor of Manufacturing Technology at Westark College in Arkansas. This study probes three primary movements at play in the Westark baccalaureate program, which was developed to respond to industry demands. First, and most obvious, this new program proposes that the community college expand its mission to include baccalaureate programs. Second, the Westark program is based on the demonstration of student mastered competencies. Finally, the Westark baccalaureate attempts to integrate the general education requirement into the competency-based curriculum. Individually, these threads are relatively untested. Combining these components into one degree program is a relatively new concept.

The intent of this inquiry was not an evaluation of the Westark Bachelor of Manufacturing Technology degree program. What the researcher hoped to

accomplish was to uncover the salient factors and issues related to the development of this new program. What was gained through this process is an understanding of how one community college baccalaureate was established, including identifying important themes. Several issues have been described from the interviews and on-going document search that should be useful for future studies of the community college baccalaureate. Furthermore, the study clearly implies that curricula supporting student master competencies is an entirely different direction of inquiry that is perhaps even more essential than the study of the community college baccalaureate.

Whether or not the Westark baccalaureate will be unique to Fort Smith, Arkansas remains to be seen. Other community colleges may attempt to adopt the Westark College model. Lining up the social, economic, political, and pedagogical forces to expand the community college degree offerings to include a baccalaureate that includes integrated student master competencies could be difficult. However, Westark College has provided a model for other community colleges that may currently, or in the future, be considering a bachelor degree program.

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# **Factors and Issues Surrounding Development of One Community College Baccalaureate Degree Program**

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

The American Community College is, arguably, the greatest change in higher education since the creation of the modern university. Since the first community college was established 100 years ago, there have been significant stages of development where the fundamental nature of these institutions has shifted. The community college baccalaureate potentially represents the next major shift in purpose of the comprehensive community college in America [Landrth, 1971; Palinchak, 1973; Brockliss, 1992].

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, community colleges have concentrated on vocational and transfer two-year associate degrees, as well as the community service function. Meanwhile, universities have been concerned primarily with baccalaureate, master's degrees and doctoral programs. Baccalaureate education has been the domain of the university and college, not of the community college [Landrth, 1971; Palinchak, 1973; Brockliss, 1992].

Joliet Junior College was founded in 1901 to provide place-bound students with access to the first two years of college. The Associate degree in arts and science was established to recognize the first two years of college. As the industrial revolution evolved in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the need emerged for a more highly trained workforce. Management positions within the factory, as well as in support

industries required specific training. In response, the junior college concept expanded to include vocational education, as well as the first two years of a baccalaureate. A new associate degree was established to recognize two years of college level vocational education. The Associate of Applied Science certified that the graduate had received training on essential workplace skills. This degree represented the junior college's significant departure from its university roots. In addition to providing geographic access to the first two years of university education, junior colleges (now more frequently called community colleges) began providing the two-year vocational degree [Haskins, 1957; Landrth, 1971; Palinchak, 1973; Schmitt, 1987; Brockliss, 1992].

The next step in the evolution of the community college is "community service." Community service was built upon the notion that local community colleges could meet identified community educational needs. During the past 50 years, these needs have included adult literacy programs, short-term workforce training, English as a second language, and training programs for unemployed and underemployed adults. These changes created further curricular distance between the community college and university. Furthermore, as a result of this broad range of programming options, the comprehensive community college was established as an open door to higher education for all citizens regardless of academic qualifications [Landrth, 1971; Palinchak, 1973; Brockliss, 1992].

The community college's long standing interest in responding to perceived community and industry needs for new degree programs, has led to serious consid-

eration for the community college baccalaureate [Burke & Garmon, 1995; Harriman & Thicksten, 1997; Walker, 1997; Campbell et al., 1998; Garmon, 1998; Healy, 1998; Walker, 1998a,b,c; Cook, 1999; Evelyn, 1999; Shoun, 1999; Wallace, 1999; Garmon, 2000a,b,c,d,e; Walker, 2000a,b,c; Wattenbarger & Romesburg, 2000].

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to describe the factors and issues surrounding development of one community college baccalaureate degree program, the three-year Bachelor of Manufacturing Technology at Westark College in Arkansas. This study probes three primary movements at play in the Westark baccalaureate program, which was developed to respond to Fort Smith, Arkansas manufacturing industry demands. First, and most obvious, this new program proposes that the community college expand its mission to include baccalaureate programs. Second, the Westark program is based on the demonstration of student mastered competencies. Finally, the Westark baccalaureate attempts to integrate the general education requirement into the competency-based curriculum. Individually, these threads are relatively innovative. Combining these components into one degree program is a relatively new concept.

### **Significance of the Study**

In recent years, community colleges have explored new relationships with universities in the United States. Several community colleges currently collaborate

with four-year institutions to set up local university centers, branch campuses, inter-institutional consortia, two-plus-two partnerships, distance education programs and other services. These four-year degree programs are located on the campus of, or supported by, the community college partner. However, curricular control remains under the jurisdiction of the four-year institution granting the degree. The following definitions of these types of collaborative relationships illustrate the different models:

- **Distance Education:** Uses telecommunications delivery systems such as the Internet, the World Wide Web, interactive video, educational television, to provide the third and fourth years on community college campuses. The university system maintains curricular control.
- **Multi-Institutional Consortium:** Community colleges and universities work together to provide baccalaureate degree programs. The institutions work together to serve students and share resources, with the university maintaining independent curricular control over the third and fourth years.
- **Two-plus-two Partnership:** A simplified version of the multi-institutional consortium involving one university and one community college.
- **University Center:** A community college partners with four-year universities to offer baccalaureate programs on the community college campus. The university center is often staffed and governed by the university system, which makes the university center different than multi-institutional consortium

[Martin & Samels, 1990; Mortorana, 1994; Friss, 1996; Cook, 1999; Samels & Martin, 1999].

Unlike these collaborative relationships, the community college baccalaureate is controlled completely by the local community college. In this respect, the local community college district governs the community college baccalaureate [Evelyn, 1999]. A few community colleges have already established baccalaureate programs that are governed by the local district board of directors and in response to community needs [Garmon, 1998; Walker, 1998a,b,c].

### **Community College Baccalaureate Programs**

Several community colleges currently offer baccalaureate programs in the United States. These community colleges are The Fashion Institute of Technology, in New York State; Utah Valley College in Utah; Dixie College in Utah; Great Basin College in Nevada; and Westark College in Arkansas. These schools are all public institutions. Moreover, the 1999 Florida legislature approved legislation allowing Florida's 27 community colleges to offer baccalaureate programs.

In 1989, five of the seven British Columbia community colleges were changed into university colleges. The university college is a close approximation to the comprehensive community college, with the exception that these institutions also offer baccalaureates. Similar programs exist in Alberta and Ontario [Callagher & Merner, 1983; Dennison, 1998; Petch, 1998; Allen, 1999; McDowell, 2000; Carr, 2001].

The Fashion Institute of Technology (F.I.T.), in New York, established the first community college baccalaureate programs in the United States in 1976. From 1976 to 1981, F.I.T. initiated seven upper-division programs: six programs resulting in the awarding of a bachelor of arts or bachelor of science, and one three-year certificate program in illustration. Fashion Institute of Technology's baccalaureate curriculum is built upon the backbone of its A.A.S. degree. Fashion Institute of Technology's primary focus remains its 16 associate degree programs that provide education for those who are wishing to be designers, manage production, and market fashion products for related industries and professions. Furthermore, F.I.T. provides a wide-range of community service programs to its district. The addition of F.I.T.'s bachelor degree programs is an attempt to provide students in the fashion industry with the basic work skills they need that do not fit into a two-year program [Call, 1997].

In 1992, Utah Valley Community College was granted legislative approval to begin offering baccalaureates. However, over the next five years the mission of the college changed from that of a comprehensive community college to a four-year college. In 1994, the name of the college was changed from Utah Valley Community College to Utah Valley College, to reflect this new mission. A 1999 strategic plan made it clear that the baccalaureate programs at Utah Valley would expand in subsequent years to include up to 26 four-year degree programs, and become the primary focus of the school. Utah Valley College's emphasis has shifted from community college to a wide array of baccalaureates [Nelsen, 1992; Wright, 1992;

Utah Valley College, 1995; Chance, 1998; Egan, 1998a,b; Foxley, 1998; Sullivan, 1998a,b; Van Splawn, 1998; Egan, 1999a,b; Chronicle of Higher Education, 1999; Groutage, 1999; Sullivan, 1999].

Utah's Dixie College has initiated the development of a limited number of bachelor degree programs. The 1999 Utah legislature passed legislation supporting Dixie's request to create a bachelor's degree in education. Dixie wants to follow in the footsteps of Utah Valley and change from a comprehensive community college to a focus on university level degree programs [Egan, 1998a,b; Sullivan, 1998a,b; Van Splawn, 1998; Chronicle of Higher Education, 1999; Egan, 1999a,b; Groutage, 1999; Sullivan, 1999].

The Nevada Board of Regents and Governor approved 1.5 million dollars to allow Great Basin College (a comprehensive community college) to establish a bachelor's degree in elementary education. This new bachelor's degree program was initiated in the fall of 1999, and is a continuation of Great Basin's associate of arts in Education [Community College Times, 1999].

The 1997 Arkansas legislature designated Westark College (a community college) as a pilot project that can offer up to nine bachelor's degrees [Harriman & Thicksten, 1997]. The first and only Westark bachelor's program thus far began with a cohort of 20 in the fall of 1998. This initial program is a three-year Bachelor's of Manufacturing Technology [Harriman & Thicksten, 1997; Bonneville Democrat, 1998; Deerwood Democrat, 1998; Greenwood Democrat,

1998; Press Argus-Courier, 1998; Times Record, 1998a,b; Times Star, 1998; Evelyn, 1999; Speer, 1999; Trannehill & Conner, 2001].

The United States is not the only country with Community colleges expanding their mission to include baccalaureates. With the purpose of accommodating British Columbia's regional higher education needs, the university college system was established in 1989. British Columbia's university colleges provide traditional community college and baccalaureate programs to a region that covers more square miles than the state of Texas. University colleges are very similar to the community colleges in the United States, with the primary difference that university colleges offer baccalaureates [Callagher & Merner, 1983; Dennison, 1998; Petch, 1998; Allen, 1999; McDowell, 2000; Carr, 2001].

The university college system was established to provide new higher education choices to both urban and rural residents. One of the university colleges is located in British Columbia's largest metropolitan area, in close proximity to the University of British Columbia. The other four university colleges are rural and not in close proximity to other universities or colleges [Callagher & Merner, 1983; Dennison, 1998; Petch, 1998; Allen, 1999; McDowell, 2000; Carr, 2001].

Not only are community colleges in the United States and Canada currently offering bachelor's level education and degrees, several states have attempted, or are currently attempting, to provide baccalaureate level programs. In 1999, Governor Jeb Bush signed legislation allowing Florida's 27 community colleges to offer baccalaureate programs. Essentially, the Florida community college must

determine that there is community demand for the baccalaureate program, then allow the Florida University System the opportunity to meet the identified need. If the university system is unable or unwilling to meet the need, the local community college can establish the identified baccalaureate program. If the community college district decides to initiate a baccalaureate program, the university system is required to provide additional financial support for the third and fourth year of the baccalaureate program(s). To help fund this potential expansion the state university system received additional funding from the legislature. Currently, community college leaders in Florida are concerned that the university system will be reluctant to fully comply with the new state law [Florida Community College System, 1998; Walker, 1998a,b,c; Florida Legislature, 1999; James, 1999; Schmidt, 1999; Shoun, 1999].

The 1985 Texas House of Representatives considered a bill, introduced at the suggestion of Navarro Community College District, which would have created a four-year community college in Texas. Under the proposed legislation, a four-year community college could be established by local election in counties with not more than 40,000 residents and with at least 7,000 students in the county school system. At that time, the Texas legislature was having difficulty funding the state university system. This legislation was introduced as a low-cost alternative to extend baccalaureate programs to rural Texas communities. The legislation failed to become law. To date, no further legislation concerning the Texas four-year

community college has been introduced [Corsicana Daily Sun, 1985; Waldrop, 1985].

Kansas, Arizona, and Oregon have to date all been unsuccessful at convincing legislative bodies to allow community colleges to offer baccalaureates [Center, 1997; Rushlo, 1997; Healy, 1998; Puyear, 1998].

In Arizona, in 1998, the state legislature considered and decided against allowing community colleges to offer applied baccalaureates. Coincidentally, shortly after the legislation was tabled in favor of more study, the Arizona University System announced the first of what was to become many applied baccalaureate programs. This story has been repeated in every state to consider this change, with the exception of Arkansas, Florida, Nevada, and Utah [Healy, 1998].

Finally, at a 1998 meeting of the American Association of Community Colleges, one of the highest attended sessions was a discussion of the community college baccalaureate. This far-reaching dialogue demonstrated that there is strong interest in this shift in direction among community college leadership [Campbell, et al., 1998; Garmon, 1998].

### **Preview of Report**

This study was initiated to describe the factors and issues surrounding development of the three-year Bachelor's of Manufacturing Technology degree that was established at Westark in fall 1998 [Evelyn, 1999]. Fort Smith, Arkansas has a population of 70,000 and a manufacturing employment base of 30,000 workers.

For the past 60 years, Westark College has worked closely with this industry to provide on-going workforce training. The latest manifestation of this relationship is the Bachelor of Manufacturing Technology. Chapter Two will describe this investigation's research methodology. Chapter Three will present a description of the Westark Bachelor of Manufacturing Technology, based upon literature obtained from Westark College staff. Chapters Four through Nine present the findings from six interviews. Chapter Ten will present the synthesis of this data and what the research reveals of this example of one community college baccalaureate program.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **CONTEXT AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

This study was initiated to describe the factors and issues surrounding development of the three-year community college baccalaureate at Westark College in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Since the data were collected in the natural setting, constant comparative and grounded theory methodology were used to frame the course of this inquiry [Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978]. The researcher compared data, emerging themes, assumptions, and relationships to uncover the factors and issues related to the Westark baccalaureate program.

#### **Research Design**

Along with the ongoing document search, several individuals involved with the Westark baccalaureate were interviewed. Westark's Associate Vice President for Curriculum Development and University Center Operations and the researcher selected subjects that were interviewed for the study.

The Petch study of the university colleges in British Columbia influenced the development of this inquiry. Petch used criterion sampling, in that he interviewed students, faculty, employers, and administrators from each of five university college campuses [Callagher & Merner, 1983; Dennison, 1998; Petch, 1998].

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher collected and analyzed data gathered through interviews, literature review, document collection, and reflection. The researcher respected the rights of human subjects associated with this project by keeping their identities confidential and by allowing them to review the transcripts of their interview [Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Carspecken, 1996; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998].

### **Researcher's Bias**

The researcher's background includes over 12 years experience in higher education, at both the community college and university level. During this time, the researcher conducted a needs assessment for a computer science degree under consideration by Central Oregon University Center, where he was employed. Therefore, the researcher has been involved with the articulation of a two-plus-two relationship between Central Oregon Community College and the Oregon University System [Markwood & McKee, 1998].

The Central Oregon University Center is a collaboration between the Oregon University System (OUS) and Central Oregon Community College (COCC). The University Center expands college and university opportunities for residents of Central Oregon by delivering bachelor and master's degree programs on campus at COCC. Central Oregon Community College provides campus

facilities, classrooms, laboratories, staff assistance, and the University Center delivers degree programs [Markwood & McKee, 1998].

Furthermore, during the 1997 Oregon legislative session, the researcher's employer at that time, Central Oregon Community College, was unsuccessful at persuading the Oregon legislature to grant the college the authority to offer baccalaureates [The Bulletin, 1996; The Central Oregonian, 1996; Van Meter, 1996a,b; Volz, 1996; The Bulletin, 1997a,b; The East Oregonian, 1997; The Oregonian, 1997; Van Meter, 1997a,b].

### **Selection of Data Sources and Participants**

Westark College was selected for the study due to the unique three-year Bachelor of Manufacturing Technology degree that includes integrated student master competencies. Westark's Associate Vice President for Curriculum Development and University Center Operations and the researcher selected participants for the study from the following representative groups:

- Student
- Employer
- College Administrator
- Instructor
- Accreditation agency representative, and State legislator [Callagher & Merner, 1983; Dennison, 1998; Petch, 1998]

### **Data Collection**

The data were collected during the spring and summer of 2000. The researcher spent the third week of May in Arkansas conducting interviews. The researcher conducted a final interview by telephone in August. Electronic mail and telephone conversations were used for follow-up questions and clarification.

With the exception of the one telephone interview, the researcher met with each participant at a mutually agreed time and place. Interviews were tape recorded. During interviews, the researcher also took field notes on such things as non-verbal messages and on what was happening in the surrounding environment. The researcher transcribed the interviews. Participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interview. This allowed participants the opportunity to clarify their statements [Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Carspecken, 1996; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998].

The length of each interview varied, with the shortest lasting a little over one hour, and the longest lasting three hours. The other interviews lasted between one and one-half and two hours. There were two follow up interviews while the researcher was in Fort Smith. There were only a couple follow up telephone conversations after the researcher returned from Fort Smith [Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Carspecken, 1996; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998].

### Interviews

Framing questions were used to guide the interviews. Each individual interviewed was involved in some capacity with Westark College's three-year community college baccalaureate program. Framing questions were different for each participant. Each participant was asked the following framing questions, not necessarily in the listed order, during the initial interview:

❖ Student

- Please describe the process Westark followed to create this unique baccalaureate program.
- What was your involvement in this process?
- Explain why you decided to enroll in this community college baccalaureate program.
- Describe your experience as a Westark baccalaureate student.
- Please share your impressions about the quality of this program.

❖ Employer:

- Please describe the process Westark followed to create this unique baccalaureate program.
- What was your involvement in this process?
- Explain how your company is currently involved with this community college baccalaureate.
- Describe how your company will benefit from the Bachelor's of Manufacturing program at Westark College.

- How has the Bachelor's of Manufacturing benefited your employee(s)?
- Please share your impressions about the quality of this program.

❖ College Administrator:

- Please describe the process Westark followed to create this unique baccalaureate program.
- What was your involvement in this process?
- Describe the process for accrediting the Westark Baccalaureate. If there currently is no such process, how will such a process be created?
- Please share your impressions about the quality of this program.

❖ Instructor:

- Please describe the process Westark followed to create this unique baccalaureate program.
- What was your involvement in this process?
- Describe the process for accrediting the Westark Baccalaureate. If there currently is no such process, how will such a process be created?
- Please share your impressions about the quality of this program.

❖ Accreditation agency representative:

- Please describe the process Westark followed to create this unique baccalaureate program.
- What was your involvement in this process?
- Describe the process for accrediting the Westark Baccalaureate. If there currently is no such process, how will such a process be created?

- Please share your impressions about the quality of this program.
- ❖ State legislator:
  - Please describe the process Westark followed to create this unique baccalaureate program.
  - What was your involvement in this process?
  - Describe the process for accrediting the Westark Baccalaureate. If there currently is no such process, how will such a process be created?
  - Please share your impressions about the quality of this program.

The inquiry was open-ended. Unanticipated discussion and follow-up questions added meaning to each interview. The researcher made it clear from the outset that the purpose of this study was to describe the factors and issues surrounding development of the three-year community college baccalaureate at Westark College; therefore, discussion not related to this topic was kept to a minimum. Furthermore, this was a historical study, and not an evaluation of the success or failure of the Westark baccalaureate.

### **Data Preparation**

The data from each interview was analyzed independently. Common threads and themes were identified and organized into coded categories. Next, the categories were described in relation to data within the category. Finally, the emerging description of one category was compared to all other categories. This synthesis was used to uncover the salient factors and issues related to the develop-

ment of the Westark baccalaureate [Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 1995].

Vignettes are used in chapters four through nine to relate each subject's story. The voice in each vignette is that of the subject, as interpreted by the researcher. The vignettes were crafted by editing the transcribed audiocassette recording from each interview. The vignettes were then organized around a common sequence of events. For example, the administrator's description of his work with the accreditation agency is presented in one segment of this vignette. Each participant reviewed his or her vignette to ensure the researcher accurately portrayed their story.



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